

# NASA News



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Release: March 12, 2001

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RELEASE NO.: 01-10

## ULTRA-LONG DURATION BALLOON STATUS REPORT

NASA is examining flight data following the termination Sunday morning of the Ultra-Long Duration Balloon (ULDB) launched Saturday from the Northern Territory of Central Australia. The balloon reached its desired float altitude of 112,000 feet before a NASA operations team decided to bring it down.

The ULDB was launched from Alice Springs, Australia, at 9 a.m., March 10 (local time) (6:26 p.m. EST, March 9). The flight ended 24 hours 42 minutes later when the balloon and payload landed within one mile from the West Coast of Australia. There were no injuries or damage to personal property. Recovery operations are underway.

"Although, the ULDB launch and ascent were very close to normal, the balloon's internal pressure was less, but within acceptable margins, than we expected on Saturday afternoon and evening," said Steve Smith, Chief of the Balloon Program Office at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center's Wallops Flight Facility, Wallops Island, VA. "At sunrise on Sunday morning the balloon failed to regain its daytime pressure and a decision was made to bring it down on the coast of Australia."

Smith added that a NASA team will review the gathered data and examine the recovered balloon prior to a scheduled flight from Antarctica in December of this year.

The ULDB is the largest-single cell, super pressure (fully sealed) balloon ever flown. It is designed to support missions for up to 100 days and float above 99 percent of the Earth's atmosphere. The pumpkin-shaped balloon is composed of a lightweight polyethylene film about the thickness of ordinary plastic food wrap.

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Further information on the ULDB program, can be found at:  
<http://www.wff.nasa.gov/~uldb/index.html>

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